

**THE GLOUCESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

*Our mission is for all students to be successful, engaged, lifelong learners.*

**Program Subcommittee Meeting Minutes**

Thursday, November 10, 2016

District Office – Conference Room

5:00 p.m.

**Members Present**

Kathy Clancy, Chairperson

Michelle Sweet, Vice Chairperson

Joel Favazza, Member

**Administration Present**

Dr. Richard Safier, Superintendent

Dr. Arthur Unobskey, Asst. Supt.

James Cook, GHS Principal

**Also Present**

Melissa Teixeira (5:04 p.m.)

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**I. CALL TO ORDER** – Chairperson Clancy called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

**II. REPORTS/DELIBERATIONS/DISCUSSION**

- A. Gloucester High School Start Time** – Dr. Unobskey presented a PowerPoint on later start times, including research on sleep by the National Sleep Foundation. He noted that four or five high schools have moved their start times and others, like Masconomet, are considering it.

Dr. Unobskey reported that Athletic Director Julie Smith met with other athletic directors earlier this week and there is not a lot of enthusiasm on their part for an earlier start time. When she asked how flexible they could be if Gloucester moved to an earlier start time, they simply said they did not think it was a great idea. Dr. Unobskey noted that Swampscott and Beverly start after 8:00 a.m. and all other schools in our conference start before 8:00 a.m. He also pointed out that Somerville, Everett and Medford will be added to our conference next year, which are further away than the other schools in our conference.

Dr. Unobskey reported that the challenges of starting school earlier include:

- **Scheduling sports**: If the school day ends at 3:00 p.m., a team may not get to its away game location until 4:30 p.m. for a 4:45 game. Ms. Smith indicated that she may be able to make that work and that she could possibly move some games to Saturdays. However, she doesn't know how flexible the other athletic directors would be. Mr. Cook noted that many kids work on Saturdays.

- Budgetary implications – Dr. Unobskey stated that he asked Kathy Verga to price out four possible scenarios, including flipping O’Maley and GHS with the elementary schools. All of the scenarios would constitute a \$45,000 to \$200,000 expense. Mr. Favazza asked why there would be an increased cost for changing the GHS start time if school buses don’t go there. Dr. Unobskey indicated that there are some school buses that go to the high school. Mr. Favazza suggested just delaying the start time at the high school only and considering it at a later date for O’Maley if it works well. Dr. Unobskey stated that just to change the start time of GHS would cost between \$45,000 and \$90,000 because the preschool uses one of the high school buses.
- Collective bargaining – Since the GTA contract refers to the start time at the high school, Dr. Unobskey believes we would have to collectively bargain a later start time. Dr. Safier added that whenever a significant change is being suggested, the people who are going to be directly affected by it need to be involved.

Mr. Cook spoke about the potential impact of another change on teachers at the high school, noting that many already feel overwhelmed by recent initiatives and they would likely want something in return. Mr. Cook would want to be sure that the benefits of the change outweigh the challenges. He also indicated that he would not be in favor of early dismissal for student athletes to attend away games.

Ms. Sweet does not believe the district is ready to go forward with this change at this time. She stated that it will take a lot of conversation with teachers and students. There was a discussion about staggered start times for teachers, which Dr. Unobskey believes would be difficult to implement in this district.

Mr. Favazza referenced the sleep study which indicated that a later start time would result in reduced car accidents, reduced drug use, improved test scores, and improved timeliness. He indicated that the only cost would be \$50,000 for another bus and asking the new athletic director who is making \$87,000 a year to do what she said she thinks she can do. He pointed out that both of these are administrative hurdles and don’t require any professional development or additional textbooks. He understands that it will be tough to make the change but stated that the benefits are huge.

Mr. Cook indicated that he needs a lot more information about what the teachers think and reiterated that they, in general, feel overwhelmed by all of the recent initiatives and changes. He would not want to jeopardize

their enthusiasm for other positive changes by forcing a change through that is not popular. Dr. Unobskey indicated that no district has made a change without a two-year process and that it would be a mistake to force anything through. He suggested that we study it in more depth and get a lot more information.

Ms. Sweet stated that she doesn't believe the district can make this change without other districts in our conference changing their times, as well. She is not willing to allow students to leave class early to go to games. She believes parents should get their kids to bed earlier, to which Mr. Favazza replied that she hasn't read the materials indicating that kids have trouble going to sleep early. Ms. Sweet replied that that is not true for all kids, and Dr. Unobskey pointed out that there is no research regarding the impact of a later start time on student achievement.

Chairperson Clancy stated that she is not convinced that the benefits are overwhelming when only a few districts in the state have changed their start time and Massachusetts continues to lead the country in education. She noted that some kids travel a half hour or more to go to private schools so they are getting up earlier by choice. She also stated that this change will have a lot of implications for teachers, students and families, and she doesn't believe it is important for Gloucester to lead the way on this initiative.

Ms. Teixeira noted that Masconomet has a subcommittee reviewing this matter and that they put it off for awhile in order to get more information and more community involvement. She noted that any change would not happen until the 2018-19 school year in any event.

Ms. Sweet suggested revisiting this matter in a year to review the evidence and trends at that time. Chairperson Clancy agreed, stating that bringing up the topic at the high school will not be productive and will distract from what the principal is trying to accomplish (common assessments, technology, inquiry-based learning, social/emotional growth, etc.). In addition, she would like to have some of the teachers champion the change if this is an idea they support.

Chairperson Clancy suggested that the committee have a conversation a year from now to see what new information is out there. She also noted that Julie Smith is a brand new athletic director and that asking her to negotiate scheduling changes with 20 districts on the sports schedule is unfair to her in light of everything else she needs to do. Ms. Teixeira requested that when the committee revisits this matter, they ensure they

have enough information and evidence to put a motion forward to the full School Committee.

**III. ACTION** – None.

**IV. ADJOURNMENT** – On a motion by Ms. Sweet, seconded by Mr. Favazza, it was unanimously

**VOTED:** 3 in favor, 0 opposed to adjourn the Program Subcommittee Meeting of November 10, 2016 at 5:56 p.m.

*All reference documents and reports are filed in the Superintendent's office.*

*Maria Puglisi  
Recording Secretary*